

## Numbers 24 - Thursday, January 6th, 2011

- We're continuing our study of this most amazing book of Numbers as we go through it chapter by chapter and verse by verse.
- Tonight we pick it up in chapter 24, having finally completing chapter 23, last year :) We're learning much from both Balak and Balaam.

24:1 Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

- While on the surface it may seem there's a repentance on the part of Balaam, I would suggest that it's textbook, can't beat em, join em.
- Balaam finally realizes there's nothing he can do to use sorcery and pronounce a curse upon Israel so he acquiesces to blessing them.
- In other words, he has no choice. He's sort of forced to only bless Israel, now that he's seen that it pleases the Lord to only bless Israel.

Adam Clarke - "When Balaam saw that it pleased God to bless Israel, he therefore thought it unnecessary to apply for any farther prophetic declarations of God's will as he had done before, for he could safely infer every good to this people, from the evident disposition of God towards them."

2 And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

- Now, this is where it gets really fascinating! Notice the detail that's given in how Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes.
- What he saw were 12 tribes camped according to Numbers chapter two which was in 4 groups of 3 with the Tabernacle in the center.
- Furthermore, each of the four lead tribes were to have their tribe's banner at the front of their grouping of four tribes there in the camp.
- It's important we know that Balaam saw this configuration of these camps in these numbers with the banners of four tribes at the front.

JUDAH TO THE EAST – 186,400 (VERSES 1-9)	EPHRAIM TO THE WEST – 108,100 (VERSES 18-24)
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REUBEN TO THE SOUTH – 151,450 (VERSES 10-17)	DAN TO THE NORTH – 157,600 (VERSES 25-34)
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- Here we have a fascinating picture that is ever so beautifully woven into the fabric of Revelation where we have the heavenly scene.

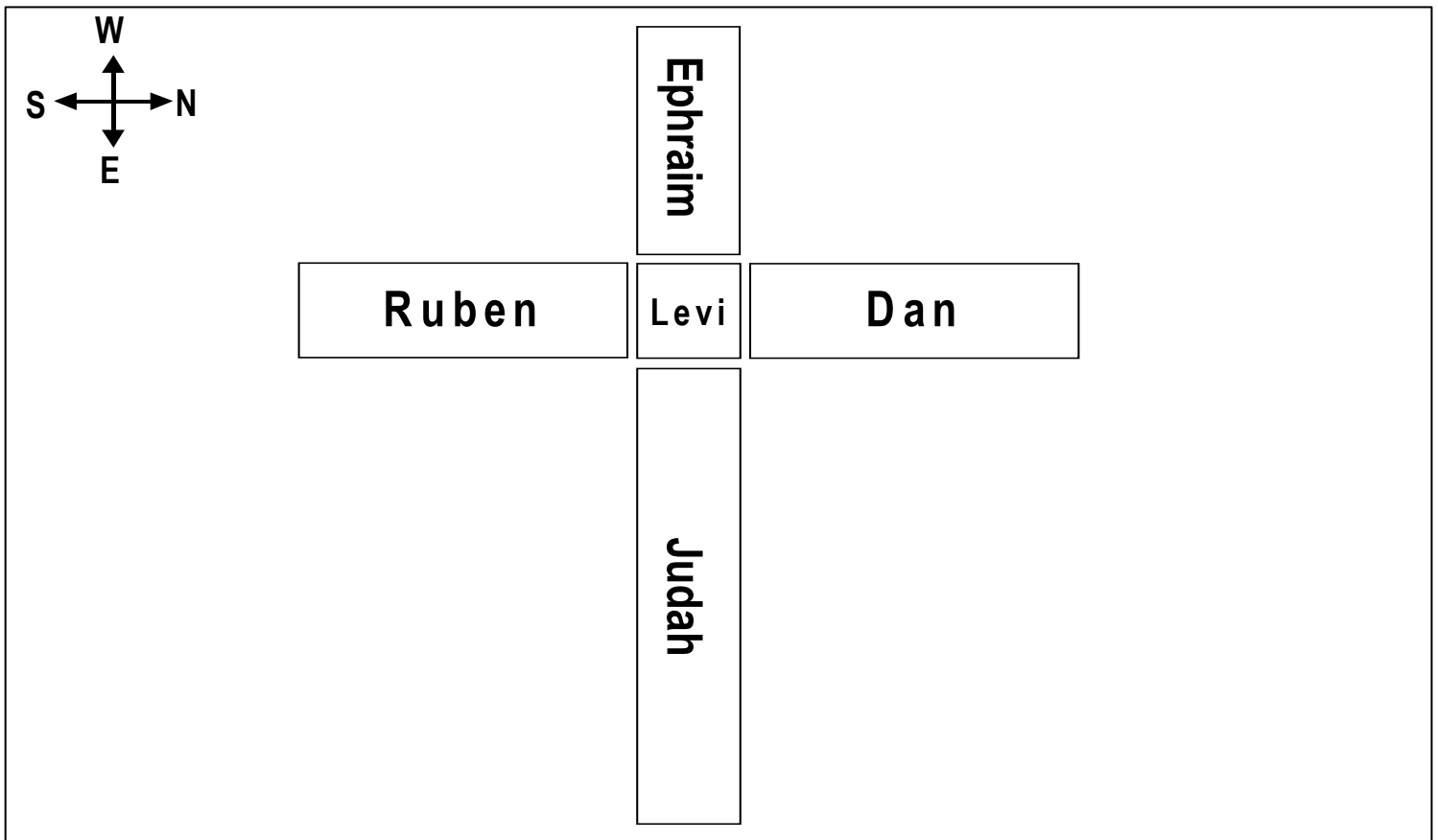
**Revelation 4:6-7 In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures**, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

- Consider these comparisons between the scene that we have here with the Israelites in Numbers, and what we have in Revelation.

NUMBERS		REVELATION		
The Tabernacle is at the center		The Throne is at the center		
Four groups of three tribes from front to back		Four living creations with eyes in front and back		
The first is led by Judah whose standard was a lion		The first creature was like a lion		
The tribe of Ephraim had a standard with an ox		The second creature was like an ox		
The tribe of Reuben had a standard with a man		The third creature had a face like a man		
The fourth group is led by Dan whose standard was an eagle		The fourth creature was like a flying eagle		
	<b>JUDAH</b>	<b>EPHRAIM</b>	<b>REUBEN</b>	<b>DAN</b>
<b>CAMP</b>	East	West	South	North
<b>FACE</b>	Lion	Ox	Man	Eagle
<b>GOSPEL</b>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<b>JESUS</b>	Messiah – Said	Servant – Did	Son of Man – Humanity	Son of God - Deity
<b>WRITTEN TO</b>	Jew	Roman	Greek	Church

- This is where it gets really exciting; this scene here in Numbers and the scene in Revelation point to Christ's finished work on the cross.
- The camp of these four groupings of three tribes each would have formed the shape of a cross with the tabernacle right in the center.



- The reason that Balaam could not bring a curse upon the Israelites “encamped tribe by tribe” was because it foreshadowed the cross.
- In other words, because Jesus Christ took upon Himself the curse of all our sin on the cross, we are no longer under the curse of the law.

**Galatians 3:10-14** 10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." NIV

- Sadly, and we'll see this in the next chapter, the Israelites do end up cursed, but it's not because of Balaam pronouncing it upon them.
- Be that as it may, we now see a most beautiful blessing that is poured out on, and spoken out to, the Children of Israel by Balaam.

3 Then he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened,4 The utterance of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open: 5 "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel! 6 Like valleys that stretch out, Like gardens by the riverside, Like aloes planted by the LORD, Like cedars beside the waters.7 He shall pour water from his buckets, And his seed shall be in many waters. "His king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted. 8 "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce them with his arrows. 9'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?" "Blessed is he who blesses you, And cursed is he who curses you."

- It's interesting to note that these first three prophecies get progressively better for Israel and significantly worse for Balak.
- In the first Balaam is unable to curse Israel, in the second he blesses Israel, and in the third he curses Balak for trying to curse Israel.

10 Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times!11 Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has kept you back from honor."

- Now it gets a little bit ugly. Neither Balak nor Balaam will get what they had hoped for because there's been a breach of contract.
- Balak basically tells Balaam to leave, and that he has no intention of paying him a dime. He essentially blames God for everything.

12 So Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also speak to your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, 13'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak'?

- Balaam's response is most interesting in that he sort of blames Balak for entering into this agreement without reading the fine print.

14 And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days." 15 So he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened; 16 The utterance of him who hears the words of God, And has the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

- Notice there's no sacrifice offered on seven altars this time. The reason for this is that the deal's off. Balaam knows they aren't cursed.
- It's for this reason that Balaam pronounces this fourth blessing in such a magnificent and glorious way in how it points to Jesus Christ.

17 "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob ;A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.

- When he says; "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near," Balaam is able, by the Spirit of God, to see the coming Messiah.
- It's when Balaam acquiesces and doesn't try sorcery to curse God's people that the Spirit is upon him, and his eyes are open to see.
- Also, the Star out of Jacob and the Scepter that rises out of Israel, was another prophecy about Jesus that was pronounced by Jacob.

**Genesis 49:10 NKJV** The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.

18 "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, While Israel does valiantly. 19 Out of Jacob one shall have dominion, And destroy the remains of the city." 20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes." 21 Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said: "Firm is your dwelling place, And your nest is set in the rock; 22 Nevertheless Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?"

- God, through Balaam, is really giving it to Balak by predicting how it is that one day, Israel will rule over all these surrounding nations.

23 Then he took up his oracle and said: "Alas! Who shall live when God does this? 24 But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, And so shall Amalek, until he perishes." 25 So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

- This is how it ends for those who are thwarted in their plans to curse and destroy those whom God has already pronounced blessed.